

Art in America

"Yvette Gellis." Constance Mallinson. *Art in America*. November, 2008: pp.201-202



Yvette Gellis: *Matter and Movement*, 2008, acrylic, oil and mixed mediums on canvas, 96 by 78 inches; at Kim Light.

Yvette Gellis

Kim Light

In this group of primarily large-scale paintings (all 2007 or '08), renderings of architectural structures crossbreed with highly expressive abstraction. Beginning with interpretations of photos depicting exaggerated perspectives, such as receding urban buildings or interiors with long rows of plate glass windows rendered in soft atmospheric colors, Gellis then cuts loose with a wide repertoire of paint handling and mediums—acrylic, oil, oil pencil, graphite, charcoal, etc. Thick, black calligraphic lines and muscular shapes recall '50s Abstract Expressionism, especially the Kline and Motherwell variety,

while in other areas hazy, impressionistic forms are enveloped by an enchanting, Monet-like light. In a number of these, like the near-identical *Cacophony in Gold* and *Cacophony in Pink*, a garish vertical stripe of neon pink, orange or lime green hugs an edge, as if a curtain were partially drawn over the stage, while the drama continues out front: geometry's logic is upstaged by the heroic, sometimes untidy, personal gesture.

All the works maintain a lively repartee between the illusion of deep, infinite space and the immediate surface pleasure of energetic abstract painting. Giant, frosting-thick gestures are sometimes overlaid with or juxtaposed to smaller color swatches, metallic strokes, cracked cakings, thick sculptural lips or fine mists of pigment, syrupy pools of resin, and tarry encrustations and coagulations of black. Quick graffiti-like crayon and charcoal marks are given voice, as are precise, drafted lines. Exuding a fast drive-by quality, forms seem to dynamically explode and rematerialize, disappear and reanimate. Destructive forces such as earthquakes, demolitions and street riots come to mind.

The two *Cacophony* paintings, with their bold, shiny, somewhat cartoonish gestures morphing into blurry pastel streetscapes, suggest writhing, struggling figures or intense inner turmoil within an environment whose coloration hints either at smog or the light-drenched hues of Southern California. Perhaps most striking in the exhibition is *Matter and Movement*. Here, painted girders dominating the left side of the canvas recede into the ether on the right, while chunky black brushstrokes appear to tumble or whip around the structure. Whether evoking the smoky aftermath of a nearby conflagration, the beginning of yet another construction project, or even a meditation on the gendering of landscape (denoted by upright steel beams contrasted with soft, nebulous space), Gellis elicits a range of compelling responses to an often anxious contemporary urban existence.

—Constance Mallinson

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LIGHTBOX

Art Around Town

At the galleries

BY CHRISTOPHER MILES

Annie Lapin at Angles Gallery; Monika Baer at Richard Telles Fine Art; Yvette Gellis at Kim Light Gallery

[...]

Yvette Gellis at Kim Light/LightBox

If paintings had to worry about their diets, Yvette Gellis' would be on their way to a heart attack. The large canvases in Gellis' solo debut would be better described as slathered than brushed, with a rich combination of acrylic and oil paint, and a honeylike Galkyd medium. Looking at them, I couldn't help but think of an episode of *The Simpsons* in which Bart, compelled by Homer to eat buttered bacon, complained, "My heart hurts." But the goo in Gellis' paintings has less a savory taste on one's eyes than a combined suggestion of the chemical and the confectionery — sludge meets cake frosting with dashes of lipstick and glitter. Laid on the surface, all that material also adds up to a dose of gestural figuration, foregrounded in each canvas against backdrops of interior architecture and cityscape that are much



Yvette Gellis *Open Window*, 2008
Acrylic, oil, oil crayon, resin, and charcoal on canvas
96 x 78 inches

more leanly rendered in lighter brushwork, thinner paint, straight lines and a grayed-out palette. The lesser of these paintings seem to hedge their bets in an effort to please, offering up relatively conventional sketches with a dollop of texture and a splash of color, like hosts wanting to indulge

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but not sicken their guests. But the stronger pieces, which push their materials and their compositions to what seems a risk of structural failure — and which also risk nausea — become richer as both material experiences and metaphors.

Kim Light Gallery, 2656 S. La Cienega Blvd., L.A.; Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.;
thru July 12. (310) 559-1111 or www.kimlightgallery.com

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